KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Action/Discussion Item:

704 KAR 3:340, Commonwealth Diploma Program (Final)

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.070; 156.160; 704 KAR 3:340

Action Question:

Should the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) give final approval to 704 KAR 3:340, Commonwealth Diploma Program?

History/Background:

Existing Policy. The Commonwealth Diploma Program, instituted by the Kentucky Board of Education, provides recognition at graduation ceremonies to students who complete the program criteria. The program also reimburses the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) examination fees for students who attain a minimum composite score.

The current requirements for the Commonwealth Diploma are based on students completing at least 22 units of credit including the minimum graduation requirements, any additional courses specified by the local board of education, successful completion of the pre-college curriculum, at least four (4) Advanced Placement (AP) or four (4) International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with a grade of "C" or better, and completion of one (1) AP Examination in at least three (3) of the AP or IB content areas without regard to score.

At the June 2008 meeting of the KBE, changes to the program were discussed as a review item. Members expressed an interest in data regarding student success on AP exams. Data from the College Board are attached (see Attachment A). While data indicate some improvement in student attainment of the qualifying score of 3 or higher, the percentage of students not reaching this goal is still not acceptable. The proposed changes to the program are not intended to address this issue. Rather, they are intended to allow students who participate in AP and IB to qualify and to increase the requirements of exam scores in order to qualify for examination reimbursement. KDE plans to address the issues involving student success through additional professional development opportunities for Advanced Placement teachers as part of a grant recently submitted.

Policy Issues:

1. Should the regulation be revised to allow students to complete a combination of AP and IB to qualify? Currently, the program does not allow students who

complete a combination of AP and IB courses to qualify. While there are only a few schools that offer both AP and IB, this creates a hardship on students who do so and wish to experience both of these rigorous programs.

2. Should the regulation be revised to ensure students are only reimbursed if they attain a three (3) or higher on the examinations? The current program provides examination reimbursement for students who attain a composite score of eight (8) or higher on a combination of three (3) examinations. This provides reimbursements to students who may not reach the standard of success expected on the examinations. KDE proposes that the regulation be revised to ensure students are only reimbursed if they attain a three (3) or higher on the examinations. This aligns with the Council on Postsecondary Education policy that ensures students who attain a three (3) or higher on the examinations are granted college credit.

Staff Recommendation(s) and Rationale:

Staff recommends the KBE give final approval to 704 KAR 3:340. The changes allow more flexibility relative to taking AP and IB courses that can count in earning the diploma and align the reimbursement criteria with the Council on Postsecondary Education's for receiving college credit.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

The Local Superintendents Advisory Council will review the regulation at its next meeting and convey input via letter from that body.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Proficiency in all content areas involves students taking rigorous courses, a level of student accountability and attainment of performance standards.

Contact Person:

Jamie Spugnardi, Associate Commissioner
Office of Teaching and Learning
502-564-2106
Jamie.Spugnardi@education.ky.gov

_____   _____
Deputy Commissioner   **Commissioner of Education**

Date:

August 2008